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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000602

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI AND PM

E.O. 12958: DNG: CO 03/15/2010

TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: TURNING SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES: YEMEN'S CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES HIS INSTRUCTIONS ON SA/LW

REF: A. A) SANAA 580  
B. B) SANAA 564  
C. C) STATE 39726

Classified By: DCM NABEEL KHOURY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

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Summary:  
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[¶](#)1. (S) During a 3/15 meeting with General Gassemi, Chief of Staff of the armed forces of Yemen, DCM, DATT and OMC presented Gassemi with recently released photos and serial numbers of the weapons found on two of the Jedda Consulate attackers in December. DCM briefed Gassemi on the conversations the Ambassador and DCM had earlier in the week with President Saleh on the urgency of stemming the flow of illegal weapons in and out of Yemen. Gassemi confirmed to DCM that he had received his instructions from President Saleh and that he wanted to cooperate fully with us to end this chapter of Yemen's history and open a new page of cooperation with the USG in the GWOT. Gassemi asked for any copies of any MOD End User Certificates (EUCs) so he could track recycled, forged and new ones being issued (presumably without his knowledge). We also talked to Gassemi about the inauguration of a Civil Affairs project in Saada, the DATT's credentials and the use of 05 FMF allocations. End Summary.

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This practice cannot continue:  
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[¶](#)2. DCM reiterated to General Gassemi what the Foreign Minister and President Saleh have already heard: There is concern at the highest levels in Washington that officially ordered weapons (SA/LW) are ending up in the hands of terrorists and that the U.S. is prepared to take unilateral steps to stop this practice. DCM said that this concern is not new, but is being reinforced with new information and a new sense of urgency that Yemen could not be allowed to continue being an arms bazaar for the region. "You have always put us off in the past," said the DCM, "by asking for information on specifics. We are now ready to share intelligence with you to prove that our fears are well founded." DCM also advised Qassemi of President Saleh's suggestion to buy back and dispose of weapons from Yemeni souks with American and Saudi help. "This idea can only work," said the DCM, if it's part of a three-pronged approach to cut off the inflow of weapons at the source, introduce new controls on MOD stocks and finally outlaw weapons bazaars and collect excess weapons from the streets."

[¶](#)3. Gassemi then looked at the photos of the two weapons from the Jeddah attack and their serial numbers and passed them to an aid. He then called for a copy of the orders he had just received from President Saleh. DCM viewed the instructions and verified that they were indeed the same as the letter Saleh had given us the day before. Gassemi then said that he and his colleagues realize the damage this practice is doing to the reputation of Yemen and the ever increasing risks of acts of terrorism in the region and inside Yemen. "We are convinced and we want to change this situation." Gassemi asked about the arms dealers who are presenting these MOD EUCs and shook his head in sarcasm when told it was mainly Faris al-Manna' and two or three more arms dealers. He then asked us for copies of any such documents that we can lay our hands on so that he could track and find out what percentage were recycled from old orders, how many were forgeries and how many were still being issued without his knowledge. DCM replied that we would do our best to supply him with the information he needs. "As long as there is transparency between us and an agreement on principles", said the DCM, "we can work out the details and help one another stamp out this practice and turn a new page in our relationship."

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Other items on the agenda:  
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[¶](#)4. Other topics of conversation included the credentialing of the DATT, which has thus far been held up by the ROYG on the pretext of not having received our paper work. Upon further probing, it turned out that MOD is smarting from a

perception that we had deliberately held up their previous DATT in Washington for six months without proper credentialing. DCM assured Gassemi that the visa problem of last year would be avoided with their new DATT (yet to come forward with a visa request) by ensuring that he received the right visa from the beginning. On the Saada trip, we assured Gassemi - who had balked at the high level delegation we planned to send to inaugurate a military CA built school - that the we intended the trip to symbolize a return to normalcy in the north and to offer further assistance in reconstruction efforts after last summer's fighting in that region.

15. On use of FMF funds, we were able to clear up ongoing confusion at MOD on previous year funds, orders for the use of which have already been placed with DOD, and FY 05 money (\$14.9) for which we needed ideas and priorities. The DATT and OMC Chief agreed to set up a working level meeting in the near future in which to detail, for the record, what has already been requested with a projected timeline for execution and to discuss how to implement the priorities of MOD - to whith, equipping and training five new special forces battalions and border patrols and forces.

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Comment:  
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16. We sense a new found will at the highest levels of the ROYG to change years of old and bad habits where it concerns the arms trade. Even at MOD, where much of the corruption has hitherto centered, there seems to be a realization that they cannot continue with business as usual. Having witnessed false starts before, we are not yet ready to cash in our well-founded skepticism only to replace it with false expectations. The challenge before Saleh and his MOD generals is to bite the bullets), wean themselves and their supporters away from what has thus far been a lucrative business and quickly adapt to a new culture and a new way of doing this when it comes to weapons procurement and weapon controls. We are convinced that our willingness to stop the recent Serbian sale has much to do with this new-found resolve in Yemen. We should now follow-up with other European vendors and ask their help in keeping Saleh honest. The pressure has to remain if this new political will is to survive; a will that is, after all supported by a liberal minority within the ROYG on principle. Unfortunately, this minority has not so far been able to press their point home to the real decision makers in their government. Perhaps this situation can now change, with a little help from their friends. End comment.  
Krajeski